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ABSTRACT

Te Whakapakari Youth Programme on Great Barrier Island, New Zealand, is a Maori initiative initially designed to help young Maori, particularly those involved in drug abuse. The program now accepts adjudicated youth, aged 13-18, from many cultures who experience drug, physical, or sexual abuse and exhibit antisocial or violent tendencies. The wilderness therapy program operates under Maori principles of life, in which participants work together as a whaanau (extended family) for 1 month in order to survive on an island far from the mainland. Eighteen months after a wilderness experience, 10 youths were interviewed to determine which program elements were important in their lives. Participants' descriptions of program benefits refer to relationship-based themes derived from the whaanau experience--helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting, and disciplined working. The continued application of program benefits back home was problematic, and followup was inadequate. Recommendations for improvement include integrating life at home with life on the program; planning for participants' return; following up with interviews by someone who can relate to the participants' experience of the program; having postprogram support in the form of communication and coordination with other programs; and obtaining acceptance by the "pakeha" (New Zealanders of European heritage) dominated mental health care and youth justice systems of the value of Maori knowledge, accompanied by financial support for Maori-operated mental health services. (Contains 39 references and a glossary of Maori terms.) (TD)

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Reflections on Wilderness Therapy

By Erin J. Eggleston

Abstract

Eighteen months after a phase of participant-observation with Te Whakapakari Youth Programme (Great Barrier Island, New Zealand), ten young persons were re-interviewed about their experience of the programme. Their thoughts about the elements of the programme, which were important in their lives and their experience at follow up, are reported. Their ideas regarding the optimal target population and programme duration are reported. The healing themes around the most dominant cluster of therapeutic elements, relationships, are also discussed. Participants describe the benefits derived from the experience of whaanau, helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting and disciplined working. Integration of the key healing components and programme themes clarify what can be learned from participant experience for the New Zealand context as well as for the wilderness therapy literature.

Introduction

Exercise and outdoor pursuits have long been understood as therapeutic: "the wise, for cure, on exercise depend" (Dryden, 1675, cited in Spencer, 1990). These ideas were first put into official practice during World War II with an Outward Bound training program in Scotland intended to physically and psychologically prepare men for life at sea (Berman & Anton, 1988). Outward Bound has blossomed to cater for populations ranging from high school students to corporate managers (Burton, 1981) and physical activity programmes have become a popular adjunct to mental health services (Minor & Elrod, 1990; Marx, 1988; Hilyer, Wilson, Dillon, Caro et. al., 1982; Wright, 1982; Collingwood & Engelsjerd, 1977). The environmental education (Miles, 1986) and life changing experiences (Berman & Anton, 1988) that Outward Bound and other wilderness programmes facilitated were not readily duplicated in traditional school, home, office or clinical environments; moreover, the emotional benefits of physical conditioning became well documented (Hilyer & Mitchell, 1979; Stanaway & Hullin, 1973; Collingwood, 1972).

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The utilisation of the outdoors as a metaphor for therapy or a medium in which therapy may occur, a wilderness therapy, has been a secondary step from the former idea of exercise and outdoor pursuits as inherently therapeutic. Such a distinction is clouded by issues of training, therapeutic rationale, measures of success and definitions of what it means to be doing therapy (Davis-Berman & Anton, 1993).

Of the authors who report a wilderness therapy approach, clients have included psychiatric (Pawlowski, Holme & Hafner, 1993; Stich & Senior, 1984), chronic drug dependent (Gillis & Simpson, 1991), adolescent offender (Sachs & Miller, 1992; Burdsal & Buel, 1980), emotionally disturbed (Clagget, 1989; Behar & Stephens, 1978), familial (Bandoroff, & Scherer, 1994; Mason, 1987), and sexual abuse survivor (Asher, Huffaker, & McNally, 1994) populations. Common threads of rationale for wilderness therapy include development of interpersonal/cooperative skills (Sachs & Miller, 1992; Berman & Anton, 1988; Behar & Stephens, 1978), self concept (Klorer, 1992; Brown, 1986), connecting of physical and cognitive dimensions of self (Mason, 1987), transforming body image (Arnold, 1994), reducing substance use (Behar & Stephens, 1978), promoting adaptive, pro-social behaviour (Berman & Anton, 1988; Pawlowski, Holme & Hafner, 1993) and increasing motivation (Berman & Anton, 1988).

Mulvey, Arthur and Reppuci (1993) summarise that while claims are often made to the apparent effectiveness of wilderness programmes in the treatment of juvenile delinquency, the "nature, extent, and conditions under which positive outcomes occur is unknown" (p. 154). It seems illusory, however, to try and compare a vast array of programmes on the basis of possibly only one similarity: that they occur in wilderness settings. While programme diversity makes evaluative comparisons difficult, it lends well to descriptive and discursive approaches. Wilderness therapy research to date has concentrated on testing clinical objectives rather than more openly trying to learn from those who have experienced the programmes, for example, discerning what was important to the participants.

During August of 1993 the author attended Te Whakapakari Youth Programme with twelve young people as a participant-observer. All twelve programme participants were interviewed before they left the programme and as the first phase of the present study, ten were re-interviewed during late 1994 through early 1995. Evaluation of treatment initiatives for emotionally disturbed and behaviourally problematic youth typically focuses on recidivism as the measure of success or failure (Mulvey, Arthur & Reppuci, 1993; Basta & Davidson, 1988). In an effort to expand upon this tradition, participants were provided the opportunity to add additional variables in order to capture the richness of experience that exists in Te Whakapakari Youth Programme (Great Barrier Island, New Zealand) and the lives of the young people who attend it. Such richness is not captured by statistics, yet represents the broader contextual explanations for understanding why and how change did or did not occur. Few researchers in the wilderness therapy literature have privileged the knowledge and experience of the young person about their own understanding of what participants have obtained from youth programmes.

Overview of the Programme

Originating as a Maori Affairs initiative in 1977, Te Whakapakari Youth Programme on Great Barrier Island, New Zealand, brought together youth of many different cultures.

The programme was run under Maori principles of life and promoted participants working together as a whaanau (extended family) in order to survive in their wilderness surroundings for the period of one month. Referrals came primarily from the youth justice branch of the Children and Young Persons Service as a result of a family group conference. Youth justice covered the $1000 per programme required for each participant. The goals of the programme as described by the co-ordinator were to create a wilderness environment that will foster confidence, trust, community, co-operation, hope, cultural understanding, and an appreciation for nature. Whakapakari co-ordinators aim to break the cycle of abuse and give participants both the skills, kaha (inner strength), and spirituality to do so.

Programme participants were given responsibility and challenges in an outdoor environment, learnt a range of technical and cultural skills, became socially involved in a closely-knit whaanau and were given the opportunity of confronting the problems of the past. Each day was spent gathering firewood and kai moana (seafood), preparing food and maintaining makeshift accommodation on an island five hours by boat from the troubles of the mainland. Whakapakari prospered through the use of positively organised peer pressure; it was a group event and therefore most suitable for those that could work as part of a team. In discussions with the programme co-ordinator about the philosophy of the programme, he discussed trying to break the cycle of abuse. As he said to his participants: "Whatever you have done in the past, we don't care; you are here now to learn, develop and grow" a statement which translates the word "whakapakari."

Programme participants.

While Whakapakari is a Maori initiative designed to help young Maori, particularly those involved in drug/solvent abuse; the programme co-ordinators accept participants from wide ranging cultures and ages. Participants ranged in age between thirteen and eighteen and suffered from a variety of problems including sexual/physical/drug abuse, neglect, and antisocial/violent tendencies. Participants had been in trouble with the law from an early age and had each spent time in youth institutions due to involvement in theft, robbery, car conversion, use of firearms or assault. Only one female participant attended the programme.

Supervisors.

Whakapakari supervisors were primarily participants who had graduated to the status of supervisor through spending extra time on the programme. On the programme observed for this study, there were three paid supervisors (two males) and two trainee supervisors (both males).

Co-ordinators.

Hone and Willi daSilva co-ordinated Whakapakari together. Hone is the primary facilitator of each programme. While not supervising a specific group of programme participants, he maintained a directive role: organising activities, directing and advising supervisors and general management. Hone had an additional role as counsellor. Willi was primarily based on the mainland and dealt with administrative issues, liaised with

agencies and families of participants, and organised the components of the programme which occurred in Auckland.

Method

The thesis that drives this study is that by carefully reading and attending to the spoken texts of youth, psychologists can enhance their understanding of, learn from, and improve their relationships with youth. Like Decker and Van Winkle (1996) this is a study of the young person's perspective, guided by the premise that the best information about the experience of young people would come from young people contacted directly in the field. A "text" therefore is a spoken representation of personal experience. In this study, texts are generated from interviews and casual conversations in a field setting.

Methodological narrative: The process of doing research.

It was the last day, the day we all returned from our wilderness retreat on Great Barrier Island to the hustle and bustle of life on the mainland; the day participants went back to their invariably difficult home environs. As we crashed back through the waves, I thought of each participant: "What would become of them?" "Was this it?" "Were they now expected to be fully functioning and contributing members of society?" "Would I ever see them again?" I had in my head, in my notes and in my photographs, the memories of an enlightening experience. Over the months that followed, while I wrote about the experience of Te Whakapakari Youth Programme (Eggleston, 1993), each participant was having a new experience. A year after we had returned from Great Barrier Island I began tracing the whereabouts of each participant. They had spread out across the country, only one having a stable address for the year that followed. I sent out a letter to each participant addressed to the "current address" on the Whakapakari referral form and received a response from one letter out of twelve. I then spent a week in Auckland during August of 1994 trying to trace and interview participants. By the end of that week, I had interviewed two participants and had come across many difficulties.

Firstly, the participants themselves moved around a great deal and the whereabouts of many were unknown even to their parents. Secondly, those who were living at home tended to have parents that were also somewhat transitory: addresses changed and no forwarding address was readily available. Thirdly, ten of the twelve participants either had no phone number or the phone had been cut. This was unsuccessfully my secondary form of contact after letters.

In the official realm I came up against the Privacy Act (1993) with regard to government departments supplying me with information about their clients. I attempted to get around this problem by leaving the following message to be passed on to the participant by their social worker: "Erin Eggleston is trying to contact you as part of his research and would you please ring him collect if you are willing to be part of the study." They therefore had the right to decline participation and retain their privacy if they chose to. It was somewhat hit and miss whether I came across a helpful official. However, I found that by faxing around the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Service (CYPS) and the Department of Corrections, I was able to find a number of reliable social workers who went out of their way to legally provide me with the information I required. I was able to find the ex-Whakapakari participants (or them find me as happened most often) because of the rapport I had established through one month together in a wilderness

survival situation. Regardless of whether the seeds for a good interview had already been sown, participants proved very difficult to find.

Finding participants.

Andrew, for example, was particularly difficult to locate. His mother had moved without a forwarding address, and neither Social Welfare nor the Police could help me as he had not been in trouble (and got caught) since Whakapakari. Five months later one of the other participants reported seeing Andrew working at a bar in town; I went down to the bar and got his phone number from the manager. Andrew was very surprised that I had managed to find him. He was happy to talk with me, but I had a sense that he was not telling me everything. Finding Anna was not easy. She had moved at least four times since coming back from the Barrier. I was eventually able to contact her via the CYPS who, after negotiation, gave me the number of her mother. By the time I reached Anna, she was becoming settled in the rural town where she has been for the past nine months.

I interviewed Rewi in a Secure Care Unit. He had spent much of his teenage years in and out of such institutions. Recently introduced privacy legislation made it very difficult for me to find out exactly where Rewi was. After four months of phone calls, writing letters and sending faxes, I had a vague idea of where Rewi was located. I used the information I had to contact Rewi's social worker who was willing to pass on the message to Rewi that I wanted to talk with him. He rang a day later. To find Richard I first sent numerous faxes to CYPS around the North Island, letters to Richard's family and asked other participants for help locating him. I had given up on finding Richard. He moved very often and his whereabouts were often unknown. When I went to see Clive, I heard Richard was staying in that town but did not have any idea where. Richard did not know I was looking for him (he had not received any letters). Following Clive's interview, we went into town to try and find Richard and sure enough, there he was. His face lit up when he saw me "What are you doing up here?" he said with surprise and wide-open eyes. " I came to see you and Clive," I said "jump in." We talked in the car for awhile and then went into a sit-down fish and chip shop and had a brief, yet informative interview.

Interview structure.

Despite having some key issues I wanted to discuss, I structured the interviews in favour of trying to explore participant perspectives. I tended to use the participant's last answer as the base for the next question, trying to both follow their line of thought and test ideas I developed as the interview proceeded. This technique is described by May (1993) as the focused or unstructured interview and has the benefits of revealing interviewee concerns and constructions of reality, and challenging the knowledge of official accounts.

Interviews began with about five minutes of "catch-up" time. Both the participant and I would talk about what we had been doing over the past year. I would mention the book I had written about our time on Whakapakari and let participants flick through it, most only looking at the pictures but all showing enthusiasm to either get a copy or some of the photos.

When I felt the timing was right, I would outline the reasons why I was there to see them. I would discuss the contract that confidentiality would be maintained between my

supervisor and I, and personal information would be disguised to ensure that the participant could not be recognised (such as places and names). I would then ask the participant if it were okay to record the interview on tape; I would sometimes have to go back over the confidentiality clause at that stage.

I would then turn to the computer and ask the participant whether they recalled the last interview we had. Invariably they did but many could not recall any of what they had said. Typically participants found it quite amazing when I said, "It's all right here in this computer." Having gotten their attention, I would proceed to call up their file and outline the interview structure. I told them we would start by going through what they had said previously and that they should feel free to agree or disagree with, change, add to, or talk about what they had said at any stage. Participants were encouraged to use the computer themselves (five of them often did to some degree) but I ended up doing most of the typing. I explained that after we had re-evaluated this first set of questions, I would then ask them a set of questions about what had happened since they came back (see appendix A for interview questions).

As we proceeded through the interview, we talked about each question and often broader issues. The questions served as a base for discussion not as a rigid structure. Participants were able to talk for as long as they wanted about any of the questions or related issues they thought to be important. Most of the information was typed into the computer at the time of the interview. I would often clarify what the participant said as I typed and this would lead to a more complete explanation or example.

Analysis

Thematic analysis of transcripts.

The analytical method of this study was described above as carefully reading and attending to youth texts. Unlike a traditional psychological approach which "listens" carefully to texts for the purpose of reliably or validly categorising, diagnosing or identifying symptoms, the purpose of reading and attending here was for learning about the meanings that were real and relevant to the speakers. Drawing originally from sociology, this analytical method is known as theme analysis (Kellehear, 1993). Ideally participant texts "speak" around a range of desired issues and the analyst develops themes, which accurately represent participant texts. As validity of interpretation rests on "how well a researcher's understanding of a culture parallels that culture's view of itself" (Kellehear, 1993, p. 38), participant-observation is arguably an excellent data gathering method to accompany thematic analysis. In New Zealand, Leibrich (1993) used a thematic analysis of interview transcripts to draw out common themes for stopping crime amongst adult ex-offenders. Like Leibrich (1993), I approached the interviews with issues in mind (see appendices 1 and 2), yet the participatory part of the study was a great deal less specific. In this study the process and results of the thematic analysis rest partly on a bedrock of direct experience with youth and youth gangs. Given the multi-cultural context of this study (not simply ethnic but also the experience of being a young person, the culture of poverty, and the criminal sub-culture), such experience adds credibility to what can be described as an (not "the") interpretation.

I compiled all interview transcripts into one document and read through them to re-immerse myself in the data. I slowly read back through the transcript document, writing words on the side of the page that I thought represented a phrase or statement that a

participant had made. This process, known as coding (May, 1993), allows threads of experience to emerge from participant talk and is a way of organising the data so that such threads can be compared and contrasted with others. As Isinger (1991, cited in Kellehear, 1993) suggests, I then re-organised the interview data, clustering together threads of common experience. I then re-read through the partially organised data, comparing the different talk within clusters, with the aim of finding a labelling word (or theme) to represent each cluster. By re-reading, thinking about, and re-reading again what had become very familiar, data I was able to settle on key themes of common experience that I thought explicated the participant perspective. From this point I used my ethnographic experience in the field setting to test and add to the representative nature of each theme. I would ask myself: "Does this theme ring true based on my experience on the programme?"

Validity checks.

Hammersley (1992, cited in Altheide and Johnson, 1994) argues an ethnographic account is "valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe explain or theorise" (pp. 487-488). While the present study is an attempt at cross-cultural translation, it would be extremely presumptuous to suggest that such realist accuracy is possible here. Based on the principle that the social world is an interpreted world (Altheide and Johnson, 1994), I incorporated two attempts to examine my interpretations into the research design.

Firstly, I was presented with the dilemma that while there was a number of similar themes across participants, each transcript related to a life story (or at least "life after the programme" story) which I thought needed to be told to contextualised what each participant was saying. As part of the analytical procedure, I constructed an interview summary for each participant. I sent each interview summary to the appropriate participant for comment. I included a couple of questions within each summary and provided some instructions for the participant concerning response and free post return of the information. The information I received back was very useful. However, only receiving two out of ten return letters implies that the written medium was not an ideal method for communicating with participants.

Secondly, consistent with interpretive principles, as suggested by O'Neill (1992), I gave copies of all interview transcripts to three evaluators who completed the first phase of the theme analysis procedure independently. I asked them to write down their own "labelling words" beside participant phrases and offer an interpretation of the main points present in the interview data. While similar summary words emerged across evaluators and myself, this procedure was useful in helping to clarify and further interpret participant perspectives.

Ethical considerations.

As this research is, in methodological terms, an ethnographic endeavour, it is fitting that it be guided by the comprehensive ethical code of the New Zealand Association of Social Anthropologists (NZASA, 1992). Fundamental to this code is that "anthropologists' paramount responsibility is to their research participants" (NZASA, 1992, p. 2). I turned to this code for guidance on ethical dilemmas regarding participant-observation, interviews and research in general.

Summary of Interview Data

Five out of ten participants said that Whakapakari made them think about where their life was heading, eight out of ten said that it helped them overall, and five out of ten said that Whakapakari was a special time in their lives. I pursued this information by asking whether Whakapakari helped them in any way, what is was at Whakapakari that made the difference over other methods, how Whakapakari was different from seeing a social worker, and was there anything that stuck in their mind about Whakapakari.

When asked if Whakapakari helped them in any way, participants talked about communicating with other people, and relationships. Whakapakari taught them to respect others that in turn respect them, it helped control their anger, it settled them down, it taught them Maori culture, it helped them to decide that they did want to get back with their families. Comments were, however, two-sided. For example, Clive noted: "Before, I didn't really do anything with others, stuck to myself;" and Richard suggested that the programme "would have been all right if I had been living over there forever," meaning it helped him but not for city life. Other more detailed comments regarding the question of whether Whakapakari helped them included:

> It helped me to keep off drugs, alcohol and glue. I realised that taking those things fucks up your life, I don't wanna be a cabbage eh (Johnny).

> The way Whakapakari made me work, (I) knew how to work just never had worked. Had to be told to work, now I don't have to be told (Clive).

> Changed my attitude, didn't like people. If I had the same attitude now I wouldn't be talking to you, I would have just walked straight past you. I communicate with people: I just think that they are all whaanau. Gave me heaps of kaha inside (Tawhai).

> Helped me gain respect...someone in my auntie's family had died and that's what I sang, Totara Tree. Because I thought it was the perfect one for that occasion, because it was meaning one is born and one will come. There was a lot of people there and nobody had sung anything, I just jumped up and started singing. I wasn't ashamed or anything, I just wanted to show everyone, especially my auntie. She don't think anything of me, and after that I got a bit of respect (Rob).

Whakapakari therefore helped these participants by making them work, keeping them off alcohol and drugs, changing their attitude, and helping them to gain respect upon return.

Reflecting back on their experience of the programme, participants described the things that made the difference for them: the people; the family atmosphere; it being a Maori programme; the strictness; the togetherness; having time out to think; and the programme being a confidence booster.

> The people there: it was like another family for a month, the place cause it was quiet and gave me more time to think, some primo times over there (Clive).

> Before I left the family home I never used to think Maori, but when I went back that's all I was thinking: Maori songs, Maori things, being free, doing something different (Rob).
>
> Strictness helped keep me in line. I didn't need it but it didn't do me any harm (Andrew).
>
> Everyone was together and did things together, worked together and co-operated, it got you (physically) fit (Anna).
>
> Gives you time to think of what you've done, what you're gonna do when you get back and how you are going to get out of your troubles (Tawhai).
>
> Gives you more confidence in yourself, it's not really to do with anyone else – it is about yourself (Richard).
>
> Time to think, time out (Johnny).

When asked why Whakapakari worked over other methods, participants talked about getting to know yourself, the sprit of the whaanau, experiencing new things, being away from temptations, the strictness, keeping out of youth secure units, the work, having to do it all by yourself, time out from other stuff, and most poignantly: "there's just something special about that place."

Participants described Whakapakari as different from seeing a social worker because it has qualities of learning, it was "choice," and as one participant said, "it is just completely different." While one participant stated that he would rather see a social worker, most found their dealings with the CYPS to be somewhat inadequate. This was especially notable for the more hard-core offending participants. At the extreme, Tama believes he never got to see a social worker in a helping capacity. Tama stated: "The only time you saw them (social workers) was at a family group conference and even then they were never there. At least the supervisors (at Whakapakari) listen and do something for you over there."

Four participants emphasised the long-term nature of the programme as important because it meant you had time to listen and the people were always around. As Anna said: "You know you will be there for a whole month. There are consequences of trouble, rather than getting shoved off to another place."

The things that stuck in the minds of participants were songs, culture, kapahaka and haka, fish, the memories, John, the people, Kevin making participants do 100 press ups, the company, the quiet, the hard work, bush as far as you can see, the day they left, looking at the bay and the big bushes, the day they left it felt like a special place, getting caught smoking some marijuana which was smuggled onto the island, going fishing, and relaxing. Regardless of whether they enjoyed the experience of Whakapakari, each participant had some very vivid memories of what went on there.

Cultural development.

Six of seven Maori participants said they have become more involved in their culture since returning from Whakapakari and five of those seven suggested Whakapakari was the impetus which made them think about getting into their culture. They talked about: having the Maori songs in their head and cultural things being "choice," doing a wero (prestigious part of the welcoming ceremony to a Maori village), attending a Maori language and culture course, becoming involved in a kapahaka (performance training) group, doing a Maori ambassadors course, getting taiaha (traditional weapon: now used in performance) training, taking a carving course, and joining a kapahaka group. Clive thought the kapahaka training sessions were "choice," (very good) and elaborated: "I am into my culture; (it) didn't keep me out of trouble much though." Johnny thought the best part of Whakapakari was "teaching the kapahaka." He went on to say "Culture? That was my main subject." Looking back Anna said, "My understanding of Maori culture is better," and has since got more involved with her Maori heritage. When asked about the experience of culture on Whakapakari, Rewi said: "I joined a Maori culture group when I got back."

As a "pakeha" (New Zealander of European heritage) I was ill equipped to evaluate the cultural aspect of the programme, but as someone who experienced the programme as a participant-observer during 1993, I found it easy to understand at least the degree of enthusiasm concerning the cultural aspects of the programme. There was certainly something special, and indeed spiritual, about living a traditional, subsistence lifestyle and practising the culture associated with it. To produce a similar response in a non-isolated, non-subsistence environment would be very difficult. The difference between participants' enthusiasm for their culture on the programme versus their enthusiasm at follow up is perhaps evidence of this. Furthermore, while involvement in Maori culture was part of the programme, access to cultural resources back home required a degree of effort and a need adhere to a new set of rules.

Follow up.

Seven of the ten participants suggested there was some kind of follow up to their Whakapakari experiences as a group, however, they were completely unsatisfied with the follow up. This may be partly due to the fact that they did not feel the counsellor or social worker could relate to their experiences on the programme. The participants who did get some kind of follow up stated:

> My counsellor asked me what Whakapakari did for me and I said nothing because it was a lot of things (Rewi).
>
> Oh yeah actually yeah but I just blabber on to social workers about nothing because they don't listen anyway ... Awe they listen but ah, they don't care (Clive).
>
> When I came back I just said it was good but I didn't like the supervisor (Johnny).
>
> Just asked how it was (Richard).

> Didn't talk much about it but was asked (Piripi).
>
> Only a newsletter (Andrew).
>
> [No follow up] apart from someone asking me if it would be good for someone else (Anna).

While most participants expressed negativity towards the youth justice system, I cannot make a valid link here between such negativity and the nature of the service they received. There is no doubt however, that the transition home is one of the most difficult aspects of the programme and one which neither the participants nor the social workers were well prepared for.

Target population.

The potpourri of participants is an underlying theme of Whakapakari; that is, bringing together the "misfits," who have not succeeded in the pakeha world, in a place where they may thrive. Participants suggested people somewhere in the age range of 11 through 20 could benefit from an experience of Whakapakari, with most participants stressing the earlier the better, as "they start getting heavy when they're too old" (Johnny). While participants generally do not believe ethnicity should be a determinant of who attends the programme, as a group they believed Maori participants would get the most out of it. Other suggestions included that the programme would work best for people who don't know how to respect others. A few participants suggested that people should come from the Auckland area but most thought people from anywhere should be able to attend the programme. In terms of programme duration three participants suggested the programme should be less than a month, three suggested one to two months and four suggested more than two months. Two participants suggested the time should vary for each participant depending on their situation and the nature of their offences, with the most extreme response being a suggestion that the programme be twelve months for serious crime only. It is worth remembering, as Anna suggests, "when you go away from your family for the first time, a month is a long time."

Healing themes.

Upon reading and re-reading the transcripts, what stood out most to me was the way each participant discussed the beneficial effect Whakapakari had on their relationships with others. All participants looked favourably upon Whakapakari as a time when relationships were good. Participants described the benefits derived from the experience of whaanau (extended family): helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting and disciplined working.

Relationships as whaanau.

Whakapakari provided a fully functioning whaanau with stable and appropriate role models for participants to look up to and draw from. Whakapakari has helped some participants to re-kindle familial bonds with family members who do care. Participants

talked about Whakapakari as a family. Indeed it is a tightly knit group in which each person's goals are geared towards survival and the entire group shares in the successes and failures. This is very different from what most participants experience at home, yet indicative of the joining together, the spirit of family, the caring and belonging that they would like to experience. For example, discussion of family came up in response to a number of different questions:

> How is the Whakapakari whaanau different from your whaanau at home? We join together in one group instead of being broken up (Anna).
>
> Describe Whakapakari? Like a family tree that goes on forever and ever (Johnny).
>
> What was it at Whakapakari that made the difference for you? The people there, it was like another family for a month.... The spirit of the whaanau (Clive).
>
> Did Whakapakari help you in any way? I communicate with people; I just think that they are all whaanau (Tawhai).

The concept of whaanau as experienced on Whakapakari is something that most participants still cherished at follow up. While relationships with fellow participants within "the whaanau" were generally appreciated, positive relations with programme co-ordinator, Hone daSilva, were remembered as a particularly enriching experience. There was talk of respect for Hone and he was what some participants remember most vividly about Whakapakari. For one participant (the youngest at age thirteen), it seemed his relationship with Hone was more important than with his peers. To some degree it is daSilva's presence which holds the whaanau together.

Further, unlike families/whaanau on the mainland, the Whakapakari whaanau is able to emotionally and physically contain participants. Instead of putting their energies into how they might get away, participants are encouraged to openly address the issues from which they are running in "korero toko-toko sessions." As Tawhai suggests, Whakapakari is better than Weymouth because "you get freedom, you are far away from the mainland and you can't get away." Tawhai has done much running away in the past and this statement is indicative of the success of the Whakapakari whaanau in emotionally and physically containing him. As Tawhai stated: "You think about what you've done, what you're gonna do when you get back and how you are going to get out of your troubles."

Relationships as helping.

It is apparent that daSilva facilitated a "culture of helping" on his programme. The culture of helping included talking, caring and supporting each other, all of which are encapsulated in the Maori term whakamanawa. While participants' recognised that it was OK to "help others out" on the programme, and revealed a repertoire of helping behaviours, few seemed to have continued to help others upon return. Perhaps this relates to the way participants said: "there's something special about that place," and also that in the environments from which they came, helping is not a particularly functional behaviour. Regardless, the experience of being able "to help" was appreciated. The talk of one participant points to the idea that getting the help one desires promotes giving help to others: "It is good to be able to talk about anything and to help each other. He

(supervisor) helped me; he told me what it was like inside" (Rewi), "[Whakapakari] teaches you to help other people" (Richard).

While Andrew was the participant who offered the idea of helping others out on Barrier, he pointed to his statement regarding helping and said, "not the try and help others out," meaning he was no longer interested in helping out other people. The idea of helping others out was incongruent with many of his behaviours and perhaps indicative that helping behaviours were not functional in his social environment.

Clive came back to the issue of caring. When we were discussing whether there had been any follow up as a result of going on Whakapakari, he said: "Before I didn't care about anybody. I do now..." As Durie (1987) may suggest, Clive was looking for the manaakitanga (caring) he experienced on Whakapakari rather than the listening that therapists are trained to provide. While western counselling psychology typically places an emphasis on the individual coming to an understanding about himself and making decisions and changes as a result, Maori and other tribal cultures place much greater emphasis on the self as a part of a system. It is probable that Clive felt good about taking direction from his "elders" within the fully functioning Whakapakari whaanau. Although he may want such caring from a social worker, he would be unlikely to accept it from someone not integrated into his life.

Relationships as talking.

Participants appreciated being placed in an environment where talking was encouraged and safe. They found that Whakapakari both helped them to develop talking skills and gave them the confidence to talk. For example, Rewi had either not had the chance to talk or had not felt comfortable talking throughout his life. As he said about Whakapakari, "It is good to be able to talk about anything and to help each other." Possibly it was the Maori way daSilva went about "doing talking" that gave him the confidence to talk. Being representative of a "hands on" culture, the Whakapakari method incorporated movement (for example chopping wood, walking, fishing, or erecting a tent) with talking. For example, a dialogue I had with Rewi while chopping wood together went something like:

> Where are you from Rewi?
> Mangere.
> Oh yeah. What tribe?
> Ngati-Porou, we originally came from Kaikohe
> (After chopping some more)
> When did you come down to Mangere?
> When I was ten and my father left.
> Oh.
> (Chop some more)
> What whaanau do you have down in Mangere?
> My Mum, my brothers, I've got three brothers, they're in the mob. My sisters are at home. My uncle and auntie are in Mangere too.
> I see.
> After chopping some more,
> Shall we take this load back to camp now
> OK.
> (Trundle off, talking as you go...)

Rewi's notion of talking about anything and helping other people is perhaps indicative of the success of the Whakapakari method in overcoming the inhibitions and shyness that come hand-in-hand with talking about one's feelings to a stranger. Unlike a one-hour interview, Whakapakari involves an extended period of shared experience. Yet since returning Rewi said that back on the mainland, "there is no one to talk to...don't talk to anyone." While he enjoyed the talking aspect of Whakapakari and made some positive steps in talking behaviour while on the programme, such developments did not continue once he returned to the mainland.

Tawhai has a similar story with regard to talking. While he said: "It settled me down. Changed my attitude; didn't like people. If I had the same attitude now, I wouldn't be talking to you: I would have just walked straight past you. I communicate with people. I just think they are all whaanau. Gave me heaps of kaha (strength) inside eh" (Tawhai). It is apparent that Tawhai's "attitude" was still a problem in familial interaction. For example, Tawhai would phone home and hang up if Mum or Dad answered. He would only speak to his sister. Tawhai highlights "attitude" as a barrier or catalyst to talking, and attitude according to Tawhai's behaviour is dependent on context.

The interpersonal nature of Whakapakari did seem to effect the acquisition of talking skills while on the programme; it makes sense that practice at expressing oneself in a safe environment will increase expressive ability and willingness to express. At the very least, Whakapakari was a catalyst, which sparked maturity in two participants. Andrew said: "I'm definitely able to talk with others better now, " while Clive suggested that Whakapakari "helped me communicating with other people. Before I didn't really do anything with others, stuck to myself." While the skills may be there, it is more tenuous to suggest that the behaviour has generalised to home environments.

Relationships as discipline and work structure.

The routine at Whakapakari was not easy: early rising, fitness training, hard mahi (work), cultural practice, and little spare time provided a complete change from lifestyles in institutions and homes. Participants were pushed to succeed by firm yet fair leaders and most adapted quickly to the highly structured and disciplined lifestyle. daSilva talked about "getting high on work instead of drugs" and it is evident that many participants did get a "buzz" out of the productivity and self-discipline they experienced.

Andrew found the strictness "helped keep me in line, didn't need it but it didn't do me any harm." Andrew experienced similar "strictness" after Whakapakari when he worked on a farm for thirteen months. Getting up early and going to bed tired after a hard day's work on the farm requires a habit of self-discipline. Whakapakari was the first place that Andrew experienced and lived with such a habit.

Rewi enjoyed working hard in a disciplined and productive environment and he especially liked the way that work was situated in a Maori context. The idea of working for himself and his whaanau fitted in well with his ideas about life. Back on the mainland, he struggled to find the discipline and disciplinarians who could help him to find work and stay out of trouble. "Whakapakari kept me out of these places (Secure Unit)...Keeps you out of trouble...You had to light a fire for your food: you had to do it all yourself. Not like a prison. Prison is easy, easier than Whakapakari"(Rewi).

Clive said he knew how to work but never had to work until he went on Whakapakari which "made me work." While on the programme he said that he had to be told to work

but now he did not have to be told. Whakapakari seems to have motivated him to continue with his own version of a work structure: afterwards he was busy doing a Maori ambassadors course, carving courses and working as a part time painter and carpenter. When I interviewed Clive towards the end of the programme, he said: "You got to do work here, yeah hard out work." At follow up he stated: "At the time I hated it but I don't really mind it now."

Relationships as listening.

Whakapakari co-ordinators and supervisors made time for participants and were prepared to listen. In turn participants were in an environment where they wanted to be listened to. Importantly, while health professionals may have well versed listening skills, Clive suggested that he did not want to be listened to by social workers; listening for him was secondary to caring, and caring is not what health professionals are taught to do. "I just blabber on to social workers about nothing because they don't listen anyway. Awe they listen but ah, they don't care. I never saw a social worker or listened to one...Over there you had time to listen" (Clive). Tama agreed: "At least the supervisors listen and do something for you...You can talk to the supervisors on the barrier"

Participants indicated that being listened to fostered a respect to listen to others and be guided. The combination of the respect people gave participants as people rather than problems, and the space they had over there (both in terms of physical surroundings and time) created a special experience; one that the social workers and family members that they described would have difficulty emulating.

Relationships as trust.

The culture of trust that three participants talked about was different from what they had experienced on the mainland. Two participants associated trust with feeling safe to talk and another simply suggested that he "learnt to trust people a bit more" (Tawhai). The idea of being unable to trust people seems to transcend peer and home environments:

"It's much harder in the city life. In the city you can only trust yourself but there you can walk up to someone and talk to them. It wasn't every man for himself over there" (Rob).

"I trust nearly everyone (here). I wouldn't feel comfortable at home talking. Usually talk in tent at night" (Andrew).

Before participants could develop the connectedness and belonging they say they enjoyed so much on the programme they needed to start trusting others. Yet why should they trust those who have hurt them before? And why should those they have hurt trust them? These wounds were not well healed, nor forgiveness sought (with the exception of one participant whose mother came to the island) before returning home. While the "here and now" nature of the programme functioned well to leave past troubles behind, participants generally returned to relationships where trust was tainted by past experiences.

Relationships as respect.

Losing the respect of one's family/whaanau is difficult to cope with. The chance at a fresh start was inspiring for some participants. One participant resolved that he would

respect people who respected him, while another developed respect for helpful and friendly adults in her life. The respect for others that Whakapakari participants practice while on the programme has at least provided a model which participants may or may not choose to follow upon return: "[It helped me in] respecting others that respect me" (Clive). "I didn't really respect parents, teachers, police... That has totally changed. I've got respect for my parents. This has changed quite a lot. Police Youth Aid officer in town, Jim, he was really neat; I like him. He talked to ya not like other police officers" (Anna).

Discussion

The relationship-centred benefits of this wilderness therapy seem central to life itself; yet merely providing such life skills and attributes has not consistently effected their adoption upon return. Time in the wilderness in a special and spiritual place brought out the best in a group of people who were typically dismissed as remorseless, careless, unhelpful and generally unreformable. Reflecting back, participants recalled the good times of Whakapakari, both in terms of being "good" themselves (such as communicating with others, working, learning, and listening) and receiving "good" in return (such as being respected, having a family atmosphere, enjoying the activities). As Rewi put it: "It's good to be able to talk about anything and help each other." The problem has not been in uncovering this repertoire of pro-social behaviour but in maintaining and applying it to life at home. For example, Tawhai showed he was able to communicate with people yet did not use these skills to help mend his relationship with his parents, and as Richard said: "It would have been all right if I had been living over there for ever."

"Coming home" is a stressful experience for participants, families and programme co-ordinators. Should I go back to my old ways? Should I give my son or daughter another chance? Has the programme worked? While the programme may have facilitated personal, physical and cultural development in the wilderness, the continued application of such development at home is typically understood by referring agencies as the "desired outcome." While I can understand this expectation, participant experiences of return are so varied that such a measure is clouded beyond control. I am drawn towards participant-centred ideas of constructing success. On an individual level participant development on the programme is an appropriate measure of potential for success. A visit towards the end of the programme by the participant's parents and/or case worker would allow the participant to illustrate personal development and the caregiver to know what to expect and plan for.

The most clouded variable of post-programme success seems to be support. As further research in this study has documented, personal motivation to change one's lifestyle did not work. Participants, who made a transition away from crime, drug and fighting behaviours received the support of whaanau/family; social welfare agencies and additional community centred courses in order to do so. The omission of such support for some participants characterised a disappointing homecoming. Resources to increase post-programme communication and co-ordination with other programmes would substantially increase the effectiveness of Whakapakari as a wilderness therapy programme. Participants suggested that follow up from someone who can relate to their experience of the programme would be most useful. With respect to support for Maori, the privileging of cultural values and the experience of Maori spirituality was an uplifting experience for participants, prompting five out of seven to become more involved in their culture upon

return. It is important that such enthusiasm is nurtured and participants connected with appropriate services and organisations in order to optimise the outcomes of such potential.

The problematic interface between programme and home highlights the lack of indigenous health services in New Zealand and the difficulty in combining Maori and Western approaches to mental health. Indeed the "difficulty" may more accurately be conceptualised as stubbornness or institutional ethnocentrism that privileges the knowledge of western psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers over indigenous bodies of knowledge. While separate healthcare may not be ideal either, it is apparent that culture cannot be ignored. If New Zealand is to become bi-cultural, then it is crucial that Pakeha begin to accept and value Maori knowledge and financially empower and support Maori to theorise, create and run their own mental health services. For example, while Davis-Berman and Berman (1993) define the "therapy" component of wilderness therapy as something tailored toward the individual, such a focus may be inappropriate for Maori and other tribal peoples. In the case of Maori the whaanau (extended family) may be a more appropriate level for intervention.

Participant talk serves to validate and add to academic understanding regarding wilderness therapy. In the area of interpersonal skills, Sachs & Miller (1992) discuss an increase in co-operative skills immediately following a wilderness therapy programme, and Berman & Anton (1988) illustrate that withdrawn or impulsively angry participants profited "most measurably" (p. 51) from wilderness trips. Relationships with others were an important part of Whakapakari for all participants. The direct experiential nature of life in the wilderness requires effective forms of interaction to evolve, and notably, the outdoors is a place where feedback is immediately apparent (e.g., getting lost).

Arguably daSilva's use of the Maori concept of whaanau (extended family) enabled participants to move further than just co-operating or positively interacting to actualising a "culture of helping." It is unlikely that a western approach to living in the wilderness could synthesise the whaanau like nature of Whakapakari. There are no rope courses, white-water rafts, or fancy team building exercises: Whakapakari is about a traditional (Maori) tribal method of living that has endured nine centuries. Every activity they do together promotes the health and survival of whaanau, the importance of which should be paramount in both tribal and western cultures. Half of the participants seem to have carried the talking, listening and "helping others out" home.

It is apparent that daSilva's disciplined and highly structured working environment, while disliked at times, was a very positive component of the programme. At least two participants who complained about the hard work used the motivation and work structure established at Whakapakari as a stepping stone to work or education back on the mainland. Participants suggested it was the combination of being made to work and getting the "buzz" out of productivity that was successful. Again the "real life" nature of Whakapakari seems greater than western efforts to manufacture motivation, hard work and team building through activities of little relevance to home. Conceptualising Whakapakari (or any programme that removes individuals from their home setting) as a stepping stone may be useful because it implies that another stone will need to be ready for when the young person returns.

Lastly, success is a word not often associated with this participant population. While degree of recidivism most accurately measures programme success in eliminating community "trouble makers," this was not the success that participants talk or care about. The participants of this study tell us relationship centred developments, such as the

experience of whaanau, helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting and disciplined working, were equally important as a stepping stone to more healthy living. We would be wise to listen.

Practical Recommendations

Evaluation.

Consider measurement as intervention. For example a follow up study is an intervention and can be therapeutic. Ask open and closed question to obtain different but equally useful information. "Did you get this?" questions will enable programme co-ordinators to obtain the kind of data they need for funding purposes. "What did you get?" questions open up the possibilities for learning from participant experience and improving the quality of service the programme offers.

Integration.

Integrate life at home with life on the programme. Participants suggest that a visit from a caregiver and/or social worker during the programme could help with the very difficult transition back to home environments. Planning for the participants' return is crucial.

Follow up.

The benefits of follow up can be maximised if the interviewer can relate to the participant's experience of the programme. For example, the interviewer can share in reflecting back on experiences and can redirect current behaviours based upon programme based learning.

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Note: Translation of Maori terms.

Whaanau is defined by Durie (1994) as "more than an extended family network...a diffuse unit, based on a common whakapapa, descent from a shared ancestor, and within which certain responsibilities and obligations are maintained" (p. 1). Alternatively the word "whaanau" has come to also refer to a cohesive group that takes on the model of a whaanau such as a support group at a job interview, church congregations, or in the case of Whakapakari a group of people who have to co-exist in a survival situation.

Kaha means emotional or physical strength. Haka is the traditional Maori war chant with actions. Kapahaka is haka training.

Note there is no "s" in the written Maori language. Consequently, English translations of plural meanings are sometimes difficult to distinguish from singular meanings. This is the case with the use of "haka," that is "doing haka" refers to more than one haka. Similarly to talk about "Maori" generally refers to the ethnic group of Maori as opposed to a Maori person.

Korero is the verb "to speak" and toko-toko is a ceremonial stick that

gives one confidence while speaking. During korero toko-toko sessions the stick was passed around the group to each speaker.

While western approaches to wilderness therapy may synthesise the stress of the urban environment, daSilva's approach teaches young urban Maori how to live in a rural setting. Notably though, urban Maori and Pakeha participants used the skills they learned to work and live on farms.